無限の住人

DARK HORSE 20 YEARS

BLADE OF THE IMMORTAL

112 $2.99 US

ON THE PERFECTION OF ANATOMY: 1 OF 6

HIROAKI SAMURA

BLADE OF THE IMMORTAL

Kryptonia-DCP

BLADE OF THE IMMORTAL

art and story by

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translation by DANA LEWIS
lettering and retouch by TOMOKO SAITO

CAST OF CHARACTERS

MANJI
Immortal *rōnin*, vowed to protect Rin and aid her in her quest for revenge.

RIN
Last heir of the Mutenichi-*ryū dōjō* destroyed by the Ittō-*ryū*.

HABAKI KAGIMURA
Powerful *bangashira*, serving the Shogun and seeking the secret of immortality.

BURANDO
Deranged medical examiner, saved from prison by Kagimura.

DEWANOSUKE
Manji's cellmate, a simple man imprisoned for theft and arson.

THE STORY SO FAR

Infected by *kessen-chu*, mystical bloodworms which can heal all wounds and grant their host immortality, Manji's bloodthirst led to the capture and murder of his sister. To atone for this and for the 100 innocent people who died at his hand while he served a corrupt lord, Manji vowed to slay 1,000 evil men in exchange for the release of death.

Manji meets the deceptive Kagimura at a *bakufu* stronghold near Edo Castle, where Manji is ambushed, overwhelmed, and captured. Seeking to impart the powers of the *kessen-chu* to another human, Kagimura orders his medical examiners to discover the secrets of Manji's regenerative abilities. In order to accelerate Burando's twisted experiments, Kagimura promises the aid of Yamada Asaemon, the Shogun's executioner and sword tester.

designer DEBRA BAILEY editorial intern MATT FYON
editor PHILIP SIMON publisher MIKE RICHARDSON

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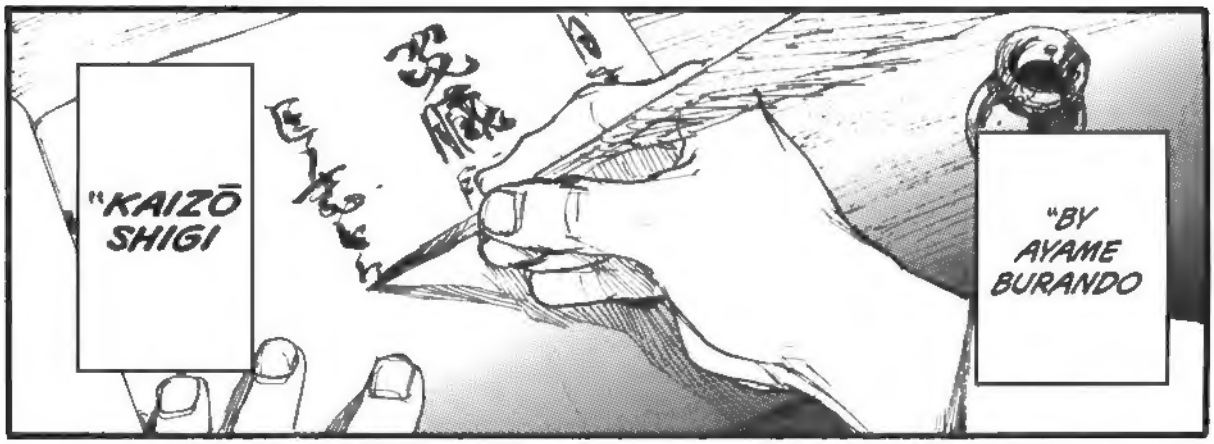
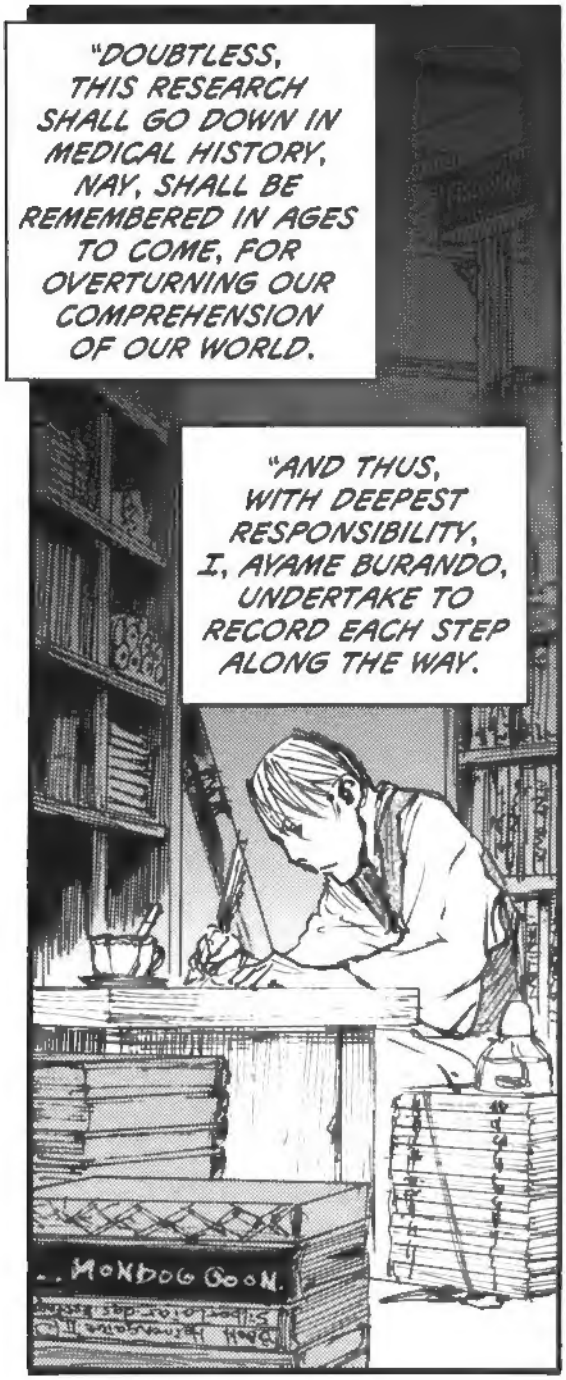
ON THE PERFECTION OF ANATOMY

-part one-


"KAIZŌ SHIGI
"BY AYAME BURANDO


"DOUBTLESS, THIS RESEARCH SHALL GO DOWN IN MEDICAL HISTORY, NAY, SHALL BE REMEMBERED IN AGES TO COME, FOR OVERTURNING OUR COMPREHENSION OF OUR WORLD.
"AND THUS, WITH DEEPEST RESPONSIBILITY, I, AYAME BURANDO, UNDERTAKE TO RECORD EACH STEP ALONG THE WAY.
MONDOO BOOK

"IT BEGAN THESE FIVE DAYS PAST...

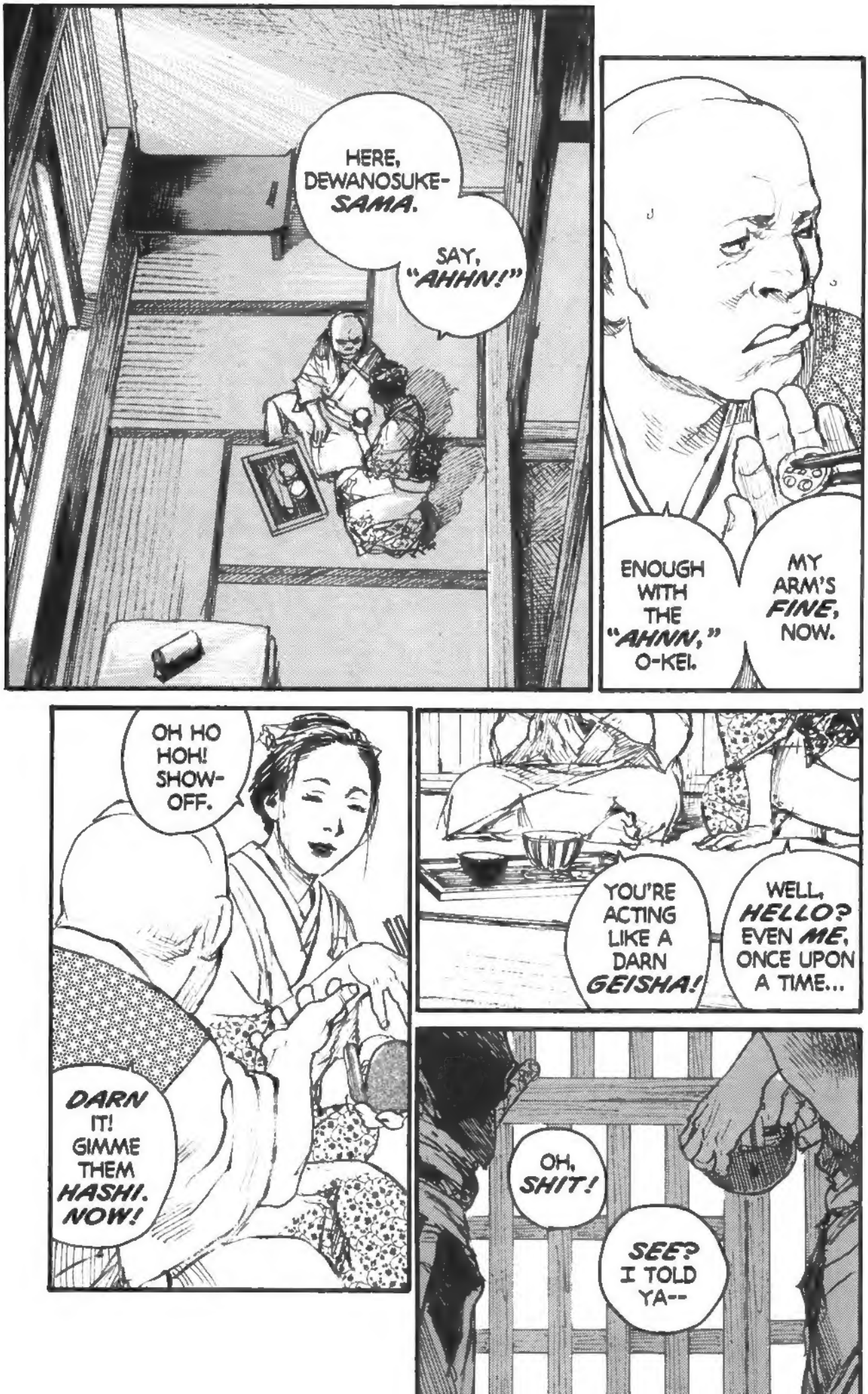
"...WHEN THE SHŌGUNATE DOCTOR MŌZEN-DONO ASSAYED AN ABDOMINAL INCISION ON THE DEATH-ROW INMATE, MANJI.

"THAT SIGHT HAD NO PARALLEL, NOT ONLY IN MY LIFE, BUT IN ALL TIMES AND ALL LANDS.

"GIVEN A NORMAL PERSON, A SEVERED FINGER CAN BE REJOINED IF ONE MOVES QUICKLY.
"AN ARM OR LEG, IMPOS-SIBLE.
"YET THIS MAN'S MEDIATIVE ABILITY...
"...CAN FUSE ANY FLESH, HIS OWN OR ANOTHER'S!
"AND YET...
"...THOUGH MY RECENT ATTEMPT TO EXCHANGE TWO MEN'S ARMS APPEARS SUCCESS-FUL...
"...A NEW HURDLE LOOMS.

"I EXPECT MANJI'S BODY WILL EASILY INCORPORATE THE FOREIGN ARM...
"...BUT HOW WILL DEWANOSUKE'S FLESH REACT TO MANJI'S ARM?"
"MY OPTIMAL OUTCOME? A CHAIN REACTION. IMMORTALITY SPREADING THROUGHOUT HIS BODY FROM MANJI'S ARM.
"I DARE NOT HOPE... BUT STILL...
"...I PRAY FOR THIS TRANSFORMATION.
"AT THIS JUNCTURE, THREE HYPOTHESES.
"ONE, DEWANOSUKE DOES NOT BECOME IMMORTAL, BUT HIS NATURAL REGENERATIVE POWERS INCREASE.
"TWO, ONLY THE FLESH NEAR THE JOIN APPROACHES IMMORTALITY.
"THREE, THOUGH I DO NOT WISH TO CONTEMPLATE THIS, MANJI'S ARM LOSES ITS IMMORTALITY, AND BECOMES 'NORMAL.'"

...BITTER.
.....
.....
.....
DELI-
CIOUS!
NO!
HABAKI-
DONO.
HOW ON
EARTH...
...DO YOU
PROPOSE
TO USE
THIS ?

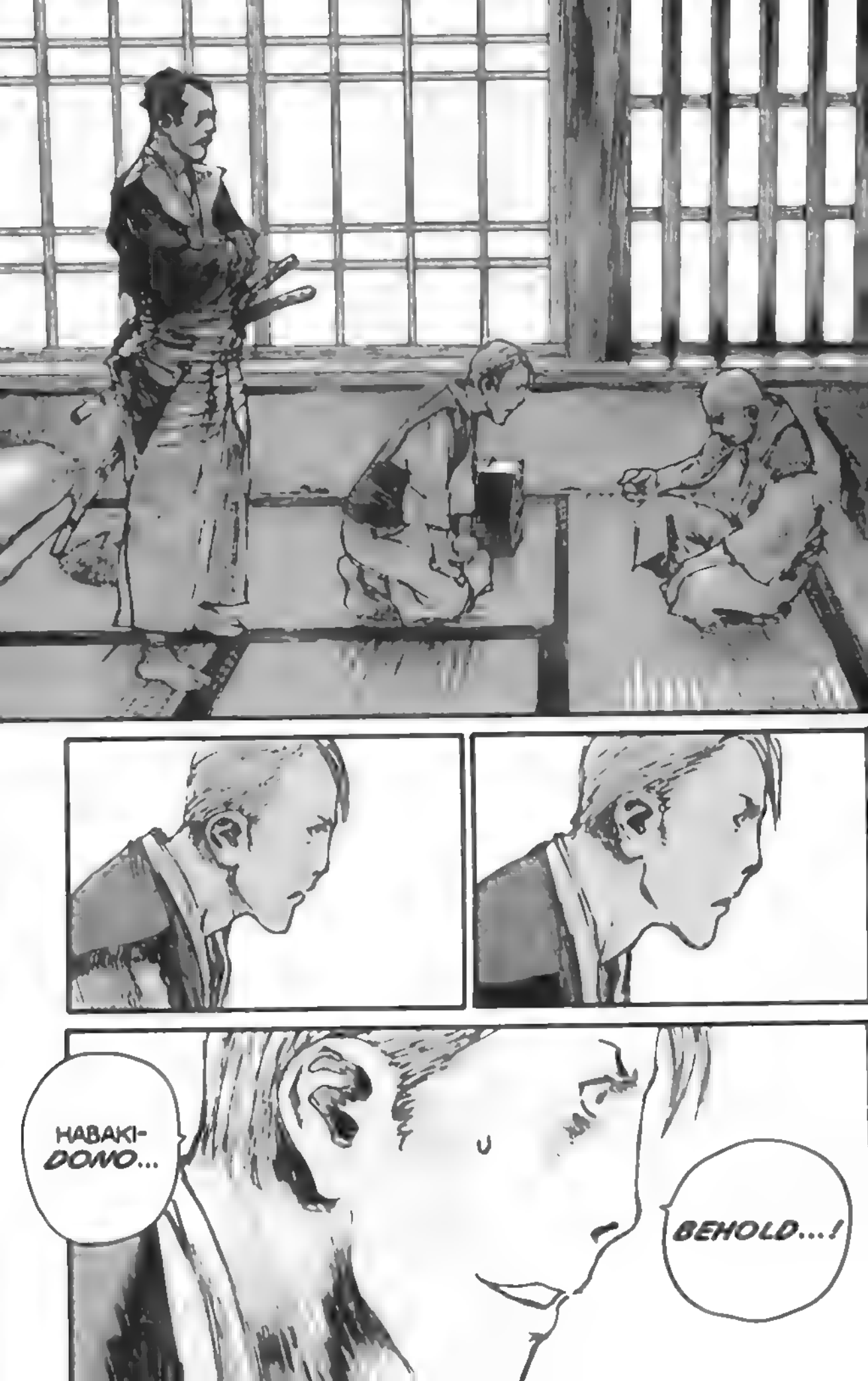

HERE, DEWANOSUKE-SAMA.
SAY, "AHHN!"
ENOUGH WITH THE "AHNN," O-KEI.
MY ARM'S FINE, NOW.
OH HO HOH! SHOW-OFF.
DARN IT! GIMME THEM HASHI. NOW!
YOU'RE ACTING LIKE A DARN GEISHA!
WELL, HELLO? EVEN ME, ONCE UPON A TIME...
OH, SHIT!
SEE? I TOLD YA--

PLEASANT MEAL, DEWA-NOSUKE?
AH?!
OH, UH, YEAH, ACTUAL-LY...
SO. LIFE UP HERE SUITS YOU?
CAN'T COMPLAIN, SIR.
TATAMI FOR MY BUTT, GOOD GRUB IN MY TUM, SWEET LITTLE LADY TO FEED ME.
I FEEL BAD FOR MY MAN MANJI...
...BUT IT'S LIKE, HEAVEN AND HELL. BETTER'N MY OLD NAGAYA, FOR SURE...
HOW NICE... BUT A REMINDER.
I CAN'T TELL YOU WHERE THAT UNDERGROUND CELL IS... BUT FOR NOW, YOU ARE IN KODENMA PRISON.

THERE'S NO GUARD AT YOUR DOOR, BUT TAKE ONE STEP OUTSIDE...
...AND THE WALLS ARE HIGH, THE MOAT WIDE. FIFTY DŌSHIN UNDER WARDEN ISHIDE TATEWAKI ARE WATCHING, MORNING AND NIGHT.
DON'T EVEN THINK OF ESCAPING AGAIN.
YESSIR! YOU SORTA PUT THE FEAR OF GOD IN ME.
HEH.
CAN YOU MOVE YOUR RIGHT HAND?
HUH? OH...

TAKE A GANDER.
SUCCESS!
YOU! RETURN TO THE CASTLE.
AH, AND CLEAN UP THIS MESS.
UH... DOC?
I WON'T CUT DEEP. RELAX.

DON'T TOUCH IT!
BUT... OWW.


HABAKI-
DONO...
BEHOLD...!

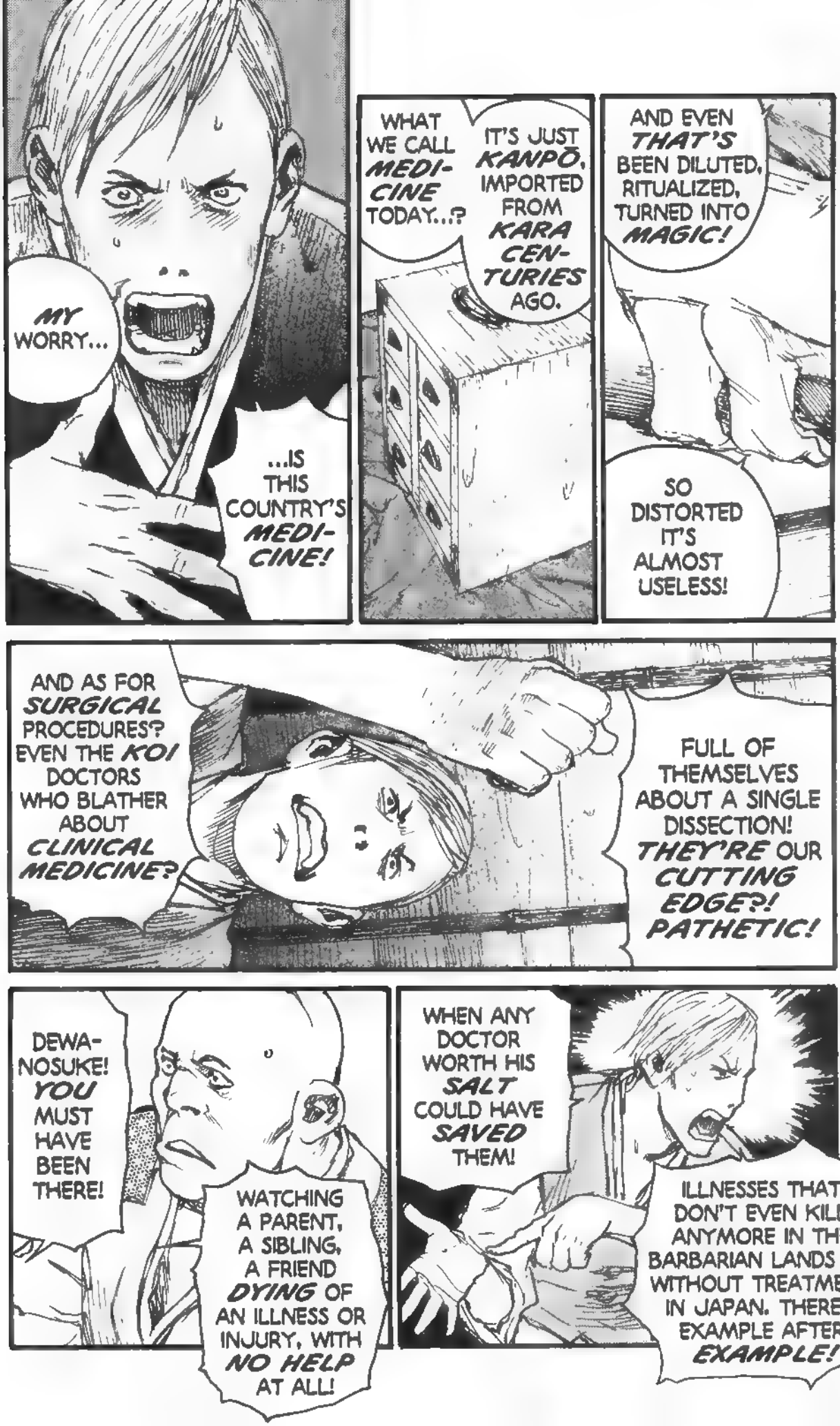
AND WHERE WE ATTACHED MANJI'S ARM...
THE SECOND CUT IS CLOSING ALREADY.
...JUST SOME BRUISING.
...INTO DEWA-NOSUKE'S BODY.
THIS, HABAKI-*DONO*, MEANS THAT THE *REGENERA-TIVE EFFECT* HAS JUMPED THE SUTURE LINE...
I SEE...

...AND YET, INADEQUATE.
ABSO-LUTELY!
THIS IS A PALE SHADOW OF MANJI'S POWER.
LOOK HERE.
THE ABILITY TO REGEN-ERATE FLESH...
...FOR CONVENIENCE, LET'S CALL IT "IMMORTALITY."
THREE DAYS, AND IT HASN'T REACHED THE SHOULDER.
AND YET...
...THOUGH FAR FROM IDEAL, THE RESULTS FALL WITHIN PREDICTED PARAMETERS.
WE CAN SAY THIS PROCEDURE... WORKS.

WE'LL KEEP GOING.
TOMORROW, THE LEFT ARM. NEXT, THE RIGHT ARM. AS WE REPLACE EACH LIMB...
...I THEORIZE THAT IN TIME HE'LL BE VIRTUALLY IMMORTAL.
HRMM...
WHAT A... TEDIOUS PROSPECT.
AS I KEEP REPEATING, HABAKI-DONO! IMMORTALITY, LIKE PERPETUAL YOUTH...
...IS A CASTLE IN THE AIR. A MIRACLE!
IF SOMEONE GUARANTEES YOU A MIRACLE...
...A YEAR OR TWO IS NOTHING.
POINT MADE, BURANDO. YET--
HRM! UHH... JUST A SEC.
SO, FROM NOW ON, LIFE'S GONNA BE ABOUT GETTING MY ARMS AND LEGS CHOPPED OFF...
...WITHOUT ANESTHETIC, EVERY DAY?

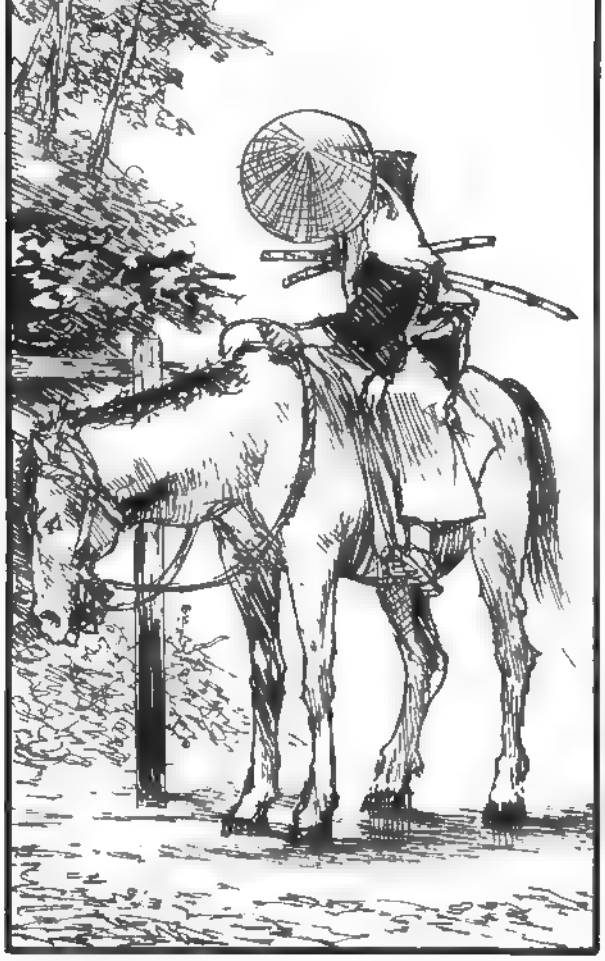
YOU LORD-LY FOLK MAY NOT GET IT...
...BUT HAVING 'EM CUT OFF IN FRONT OF YOUR OWN EYES...IT'S CREEPY. IT HURTS. IT'S MORE'N I CAN BEAR.
DO IT OVER AND OVER AGAIN...
...AN' MY BODY AND NOGGIN'S GONNA BREAK.
YOU WOULDN'T WANT THAT, DOC. RIGHT?
I'M BEGGIN' YOU! PUT ME OUT COLD SOMEHOW, LIKE THE LAST DOC DID.
ARE YOU DIS-SATISFIED WITH THE QUARTERS?
I CAN'T DO THAT. YET, IF EITHER OF YOU ARE IN PERIL, I WILL TAKE CARE OF YOU.
NAW, NOT ME...
...BUT MISTER MANJI, HE'S STILL IN THAT DUN-GEON.

AN' DOC, SOMETIMES YOU GET CARRIED AWAY.
LIKE, WHO CARES ABOUT TWO DEATH-ROW CONVICTS--
DON'T BE ABSURD!
NO ONE WANTS TO KILL YOU!
YOU DON'T LIKE THAT DUNGEON, I'LL TURN THIS AGARI-ZASHIKI INTO AN OPERATING ROOM!
D-DOC...?
DEWANOSUKE, YOU LISTEN TO ME! I'M NOT MAKING YOU IMMORTAL BECAUSE I'M WORRIED ABOUT YOU.
HARSH, BUT TRUE!


MY WORRY...
...IS THIS COUNTRY'S MEDICINE!
WHAT WE CALL MEDICINE TODAY...?
IT'S JUST KANPŌ, IMPORTED FROM KARA CENTURIES AGO.
AND EVEN THAT'S BEEN DILUTED, RITUALIZED, TURNED INTO MAGIC!
SO DISTORTED IT'S ALMOST USELESS!
AND AS FOR SURGICAL PROCEDURES? EVEN THE KOI DOCTORS WHO BLATHER ABOUT CLINICAL MEDICINE?
FULL OF THEMSELVES ABOUT A SINGLE DISSECTION! THEY'RE OUR CUTTING EDGE?! PATHETIC!
DEWA-NOSUKE! YOU MUST HAVE BEEN THERE!
WATCHING A PARENT, A SIBLING, A FRIEND DYING OF AN ILLNESS OR INJURY, WITH NO HELP AT ALL!
WHEN ANY DOCTOR WORTH HIS SALT COULD HAVE SAVED THEM!
ILLNESSES THAT DON'T EVEN KILL ANYMORE IN THE BARBARIAN LANDS GO WITHOUT TREATMENT IN JAPAN. THERE'S EXAMPLE AFTER EXAMPLE!

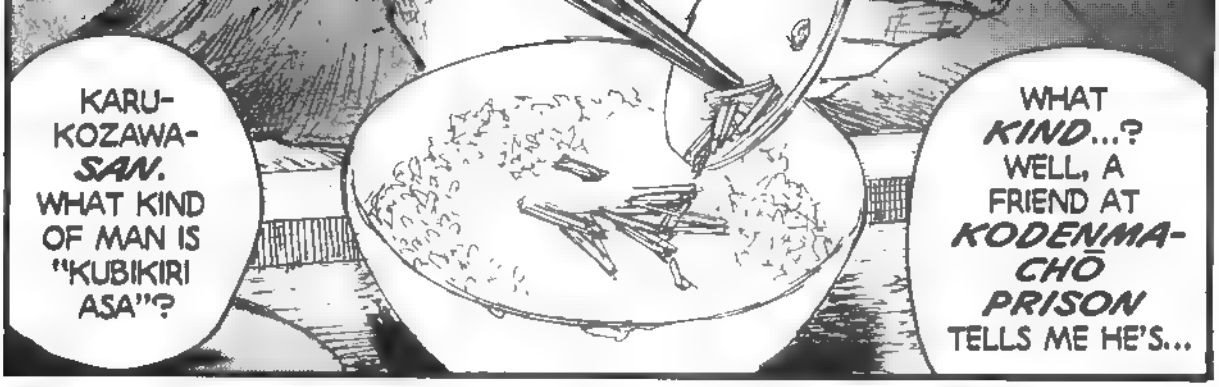
BUT IF I PERFECT *THIS* PROCEDURE...? JAPANESE MEDICINE WILL *TRANSCEND* THE BARBARIANS' IN A SINGLE *BOUND.*
ISN'T THAT A *MAGNIFICENT* PROSPECT? I WANT TO GIVE LIFE... *LIFE*... TO PEOPLE WHO SHOULDN'T HAVE TO DIE.
PLEASE UNDER-STAND!
.....
.....
.....
OF COURSE, HABAKI-*DONO*...
...MUST HAVE HIS *OWN* REASONS.
BUT THOSE REASONS, I'D WAGER...
...DON'T CONCERN *YOUR* LIFE.
ONLY THIS! THIS I TELL YOU!
I'M NOT FIDDLING WITH YOUR BODY FOR *FUN*, DEWA-NOSUKE!

I'M NOT JUST SCRIBBLING DOWN RESULTS!
I'M GAMBLING MY LIFE AS A DOCTOR THAT WE'LL SUCCEED!
SO IF YOUR LIFE SEEMS IN DANGER...
...I WILL DO ALL IN MY POWER TO SAVE YOU.
BE IT HERE, OR DOWN IN THAT DUNGEON...
...THERE IS NO ONE AS CONCERNED ABOUT YOUR WELFARE AS I AM.



...HEH.
QUITE SOME SPEECH-IFYING.

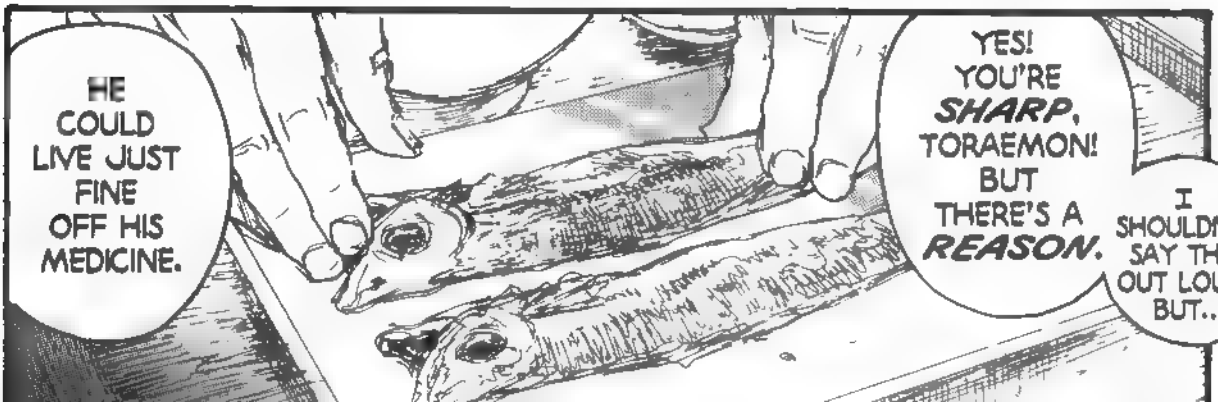
IT'S WHAT I BELIEVE.
IS IT NOW? GUAH HAH HAH HAH...

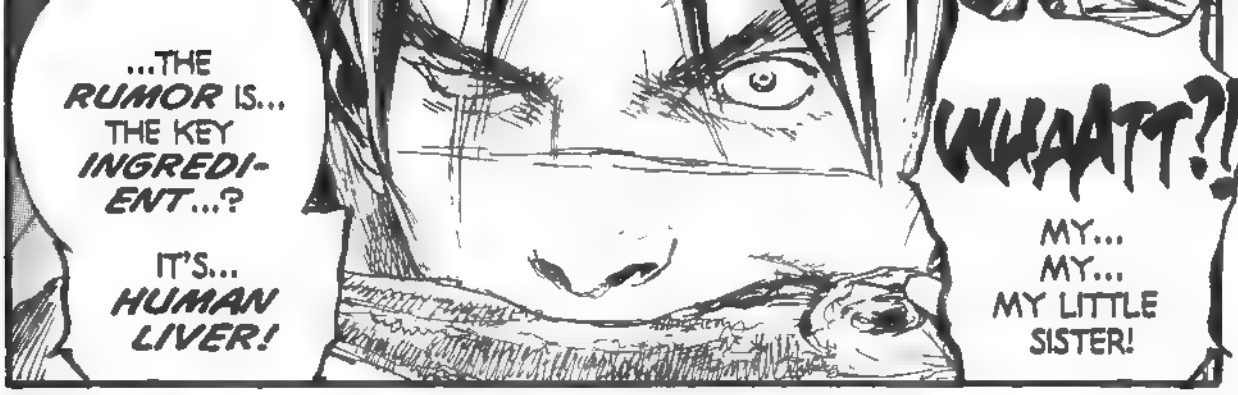

KARU-KOZAWA-SAN. WHAT KIND OF MAN IS "KUBIKIRI ASA"?
WHAT KIND...? WELL, A FRIEND AT KODENMA-CHŌ PRISON TELLS ME HE'S...

EIGHT SH-SH-SHAKU TALL?!
NO, I'M JOKING.
BUT ACTUALLY, I'VE PASSED BY HIS PLACE LOTS OF TIMES.

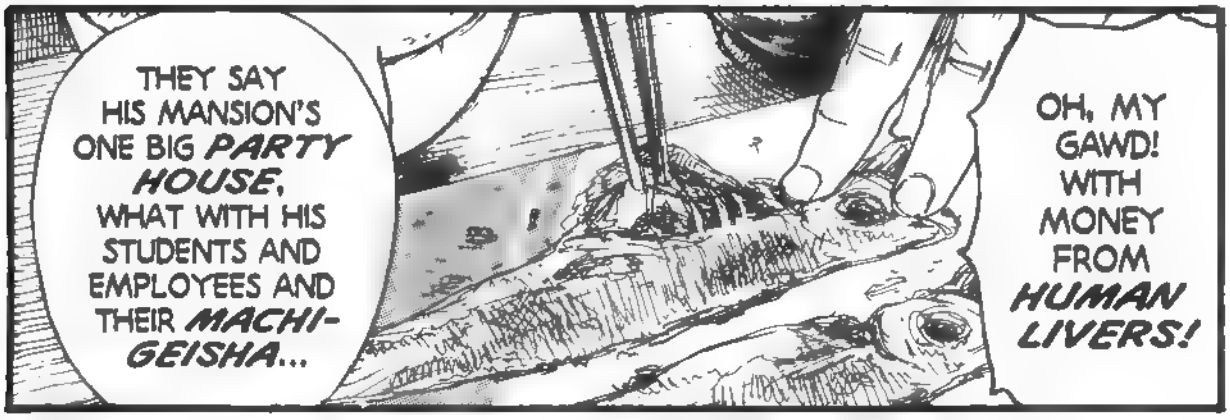
HE'S GOT A GIANT COMPOUND IN HIRAKAWA-CHŌ.
REALLY? IT'S BIG?
WELL, OF COURSE! HE'S NOT JUST RAKING IT IN FROM TAMESHI-GIRI AND SWORD APPRAISING.

HE'S ALSO SELLING MEDICINE ON THE SIDE. AND THAT STUFF'S FLYING OFF THE SHELVES.
OH, RIGHT. I'VE HEARD ABOUT THAT.
ONLY, WHAT I DON'T GET IS, IF IT'S SELLING SO WELL, WHY DOESN'T HE STOP ALL THAT DECAPITATING AND TAMESHIGIRI STUFF?

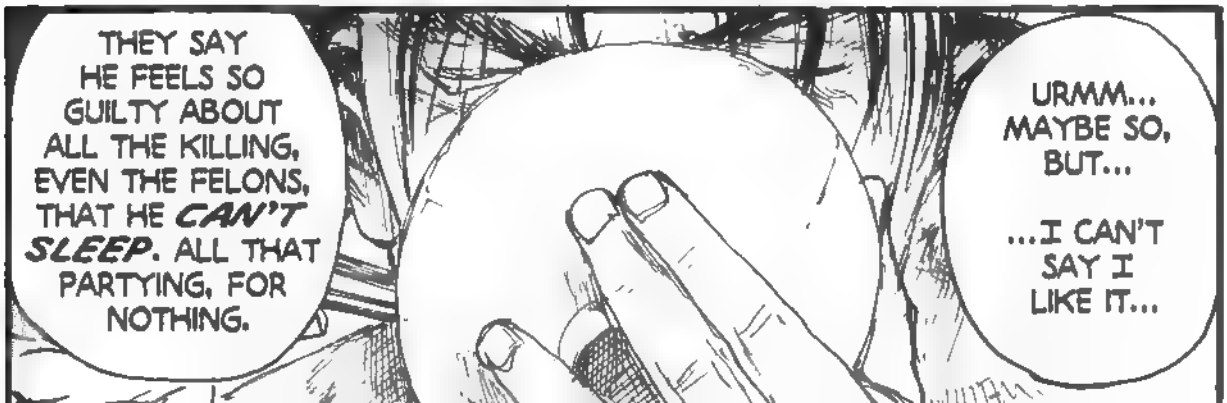

HE COULD LIVE JUST FINE OFF HIS MEDICINE.
YES! YOU'RE SHARP, TORAEMON! BUT THERE'S A REASON.
I SHOULDN'T SAY THIS OUT LOUD, BUT...


...THE RUMOR IS... THE KEY INGREDIENT...?
IT'S... HUMAN LIVER!
WHAATT?!
MY... MY... MY LITTLE SISTER!

SHE TOOK THAT STUFF FOR HER TUBERCULOSIS!
DID SHE...? WELL, IF IT CURED HER, SO BE IT.
BUT LIKE I WAS SAYING, BETWEEN THE MEDICINE AND HIS FEES, YAMADA'S RAKING IN AS MUCH AS SOME DAIMYŌ.


THEY SAY HIS MANSION'S ONE BIG PARTY HOUSE, WHAT WITH HIS STUDENTS AND EMPLOYEES AND THEIR MACHI-GEISHA...
OH, MY GAWD! WITH MONEY FROM HUMAN LIVERS!

THEY'RE ALL MONSTERS!
NOW, NOT SO FAST.
YOU'D THINK THAT FROM WHAT I'VE TOLD YOU, BUT THERE'S A REASON FOLK RESPECT HIM.


THEY SAY HE FEELS SO GUILTY ABOUT ALL THE KILLING, EVEN THE FELONS, THAT HE CAN'T SLEEP. ALL THAT PARTYING, FOR NOTHING.
URMM... MAYBE SO, BUT...
...I CAN'T SAY I LIKE IT...

TORA-EMON!
CAN'T YOU GET ME SOME SHIPPAKU OR SOME-THING SOMETIME?
TODAY SARDINES, YESTERDAY MACKEREL, NOTHING BUT DAMNED DRIED FISH.

YES, SIR... BUT...
...I D-DON'T DECIDE THE MENU...
STOP BITCH-ING, YOU!
I HAVEN'T HAD ANY-THING BUT SOBA SINCE THEY POSTED ME HERE!

WHAT'S THE RACKET?

UHM...? YOU DIDN'T RUN INTO YAMADA ASAEMON-DONO?
OH, SEN-SEI!

THEY SENT WORD THIS MORNING HE'D BE HERE--

AHAH

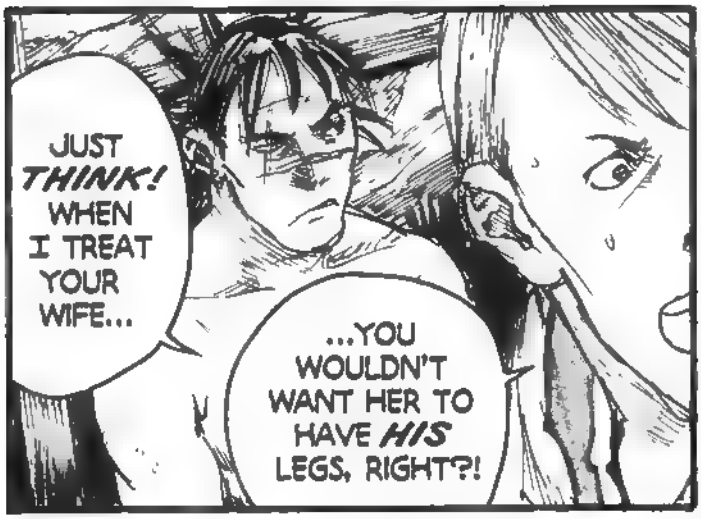
.....
.....
.....
YA-YA-
YAMADA
ASAEMON
YOSHIRŌ...
DONO?
.....
.....

I'M, UH... AYAME BURANDO, YOUR... CLIENT?
INDEED!
WE'VE BEEN... EXPECTING YOU.
AND SO, AYAME-DONO! WHERE'S TODAY'S HEAD?!
THAT'S, UM, ACTUAL-LY...
WHAT?!
NO HEAD?! JUST LIMBS?!
WELL, YES. THAT'S WHAT I...
NO ONE TOLD YOU?
NO HEAD MEANS...
HRM, SO...
...NO LIVER! COR-RECT?!
GAWD, NO!
PARDON?
LIVER?

HRRRRNNN... THAT MEANS SCREAMING, EVEN AFTER THE STROKE. A REPULSIVE PROSPECT.
YET IF HABAKI-DONO HIMSELF ASKS, THEN, NO MATTER HOW UNEXPECTED, WE...
...CAN'T SCREW UP. RIGHT, SENSEI?!
UH-UH. NOPE.
HAH?
SEN-SEI?!
YO! DEWA-NOSUKE!

HOW'S THE OLD ARM?
WIPES MY CRACK, PICKS MY NOSE, WORKS JUST FINE.
WOW, DEWA, YOU WON'T BELIEVE THIS ARM OF YOURS.
HEH HEH, THAT SO?
YES. YES!
YES!
HEY, IT'S YOUR ARM NOW, BOSS.
WHAT ARE YOU SAYING?
YOUR ARM'S COMING BACK TO YOU TODAY.

HEHH?! NO KIDDING?
OF COURSE, MAN!
ALL OF YOU HAS TO BE IMMORTAL, EVERY LAST BIT!


JUST THINK! WHEN I TREAT YOUR WIFE...
...YOU WOULDN'T WANT HER TO HAVE HIS LEGS, RIGHT?!

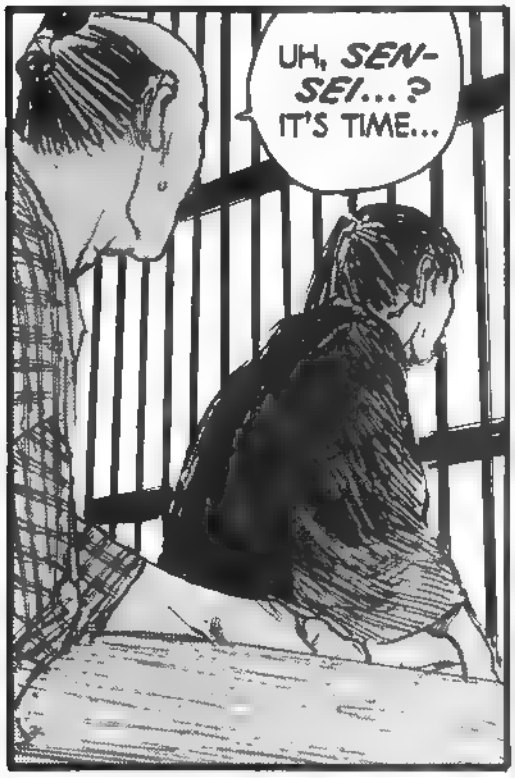
OH... NEVER THOUGHT OF THAT.
THAT'D BE A TURN-OFF, FOR SURE.

ARE YOU BOTH FEELING STRONG TODAY?
?

MY ALLOTTED TIME IS ALMOST UP.
WE'RE DOING TWO OPS IN A ROW.
RESTORING DEWA-NOSUKE'S RIGHT ARM...

...AND SWITCHING YOUR *LEFT LEGS.*
BOTH OF THEM. *TODAY.*

B- BOTH...?


UH, *SEN-SEI*...? IT'S TIME...

TO BE CONTINUED...!

NEXT MONTH:
ON THE PERFECTION OF ANATOMY, Part 2 of 6

The Shogun's executioner takes a swing at Manji, Burando's journal entries get stranger, and Dewanosuke's on the mend, possibly benefiting from Burando's schemes. Will Manji's old cellmate help him in another escape attempt . . . or has Dewa finally been won over by the promise of immortality? Also, Samura fan Becky Cloonan (*Demo, American Virgin*) contributes a full-color pinup!

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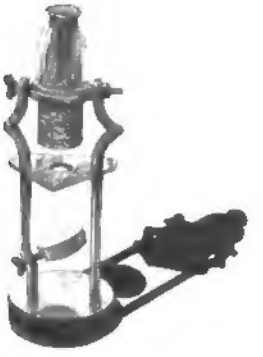

GLOSSARY

Agari-zashiki: In this context, a special cell for imprisoning high-ranking soldiers.

Bangashira: Head of the *banshū*.

Banshū: Officers serving under the Shogun, usually assigned to Edo Castle to defend the Shogun himself.

Daimyō: Feudal lord, ruler of a ***han*** (feudal domain). Tokugawa Japan was a loose confederation of han, kept in line by the superior military force of the Tokugawa clan that most *daimyo* had aligned with. By the late Edo Period of *Blade of the Immortal*, the shogunate had evolved into a de facto central government, with only a few unruly *han* resisting assimilation.

Dōjō: A school for combat and self-defense training in martial arts; here, a training center for swordsmanship.

Dono: Archaic honorific used to show respect, usually for someone of higher rank.

Dōshin: Low-ranking police officers.

Edo: Capitol of pre-modern Japan. Later renamed Tokyo.

Hashi: Chopsticks.

Ittō-ryū: The radical sword school of Anotsu Kagehisa.

Kaizō Shigi: Ayame Burando's journal.

Kanpo: Chinese-based medicine, relying heavily on medicinal plants.

Kara: China's Tang dynasty (618-907 AD), when regular contact first began between China and Japan. *Kara* was also used more broadly to mean China in general.

Kessen-chu: The "sacred bloodworms." A person infected by them cannot die but feels pain like a mortal.

Mutenichi-ryū: The sword school led by Rin's father (now deceased), destroyed by Anotsu Kagehisa.

Nagaya: Literally, "long house." Many commoners in Edo had plain, single rooms in these long, single-story wooden houses, living under the shared roof.

Ryū: A sword school.

Shaku: Edo period measurement. A shaku equals approximately 2.5 meters.

Shippaku: A rich, boiled-noodle dish.

Soba: Buckwheat noodles, a Japanese standard.

Tameshigiri: The test of a sword's cutting edge, usually on the body of a convict. *Kubikiri Asa* received payment for each *tameshigiri* and each sword appraisal he performed.

Tatami: Straw mat flooring in better Japanese houses.

Yamada Asaemon: Nicknamed *Kubikiri Asa*, the Shogun's executioner was a master swordsman, sword tester, and an expert at beheading and cutting human bodies.

ABOUT THE SWASTIKA

The main character in *Blade of the Immortal*, Manji, has taken the "crux gammata" as both his name and his personal symbol. This symbol is also known as the *swastika*, a name derived from the Sanskrit *svastika* (meaning "welfare," from *su* — "well" + *asti* — "he is"). As a symbol of prosperity and good fortune, the *swastika* was widely used throughout the ancient world (for example, appearing often on Mesopotamian coinage), including North and South America and has been used in Japan as a symbol of Buddhism since ancient times. To be precise, the symbol generally used by Japanese Buddhists is the *sauvastika*, which moves in a counterclockwise direction, and is called the *manji* in Japanese. The *sauvastika* generally stands for night, and often for magical practices. The *swastika*, whose arms point in a clockwise direction, is generally considered a solar symbol. It was this version (the *hakenkreuz*) that was perverted by the Nazis. It is important that readers understand that the *swastika* has ancient and honorable origins, and it is those that apply to this story, which takes place in the 18th century (ca. 1782-3). *There is no anti-Semitic or pro-Nazi meaning behind the use of the symbol in this story. Those meanings did not exist until after 1910.*

ABOUT THE TRANSLATION

The Artwork: The author of *Blade of the Immortal* requested that we make an effort to avoid mirror-imaging his artwork. Some manga are first copied in a mirror-image in order to facilitate the left-to-right reading of the pages. However, Mr. Samura decided that he would rather see his pages reversed via the technique of cutting up the panels and repasting them in reverse order. While we feel that this often leads to problems in panel-to-panel continuity, we place primary importance on the wishes of the creator. Therefore, most of *Blade of the Immortal* has been produced using the "cut and paste" technique. There are, of course, some sequences where it was impossible to do this, and mirror-imaged panels or pages were used instead.

The Sound Effects & Dialogue: Since some of Mr. Samura's sound effects are integral parts of the artwork, the decision was made to leave those in their original Japanese. When it was crucial to the understanding of the panel that the sound effect be in English, however, Mr. Samura chose to redraw the panel. We hope readers will view the un-retouched sound effects as essential portions of Mr. Samura's extraordinary artwork. In addition, Mr. Samura's treatment of dialogue is quite different from that featured in average samurai manga and is considered to be one of the things that has made *Blade* such a huge hit in Japan. Mr. Samura has mixed a variety of linguistic styles in this fantasy story, where some characters speak in the mannered style of old Japan, while others speak as if they were street-corner punks from a bad area of modern-day Tokyo. The anachronistic slang used by some of the characters in the English translation reflects the unusual mix of speech patterns from the original Japanese text.

LETTERS

Send letters and fan art to:

BLADE OF THE IMMORTAL, c/o DARK HORSE COMICS,
10956 SE MAIN STREET, MILWAUKIE, OREGON 97222

www.darkhorse.com • blade@darkhorse.com

All fan artwork, letters, and e-mails submitted become the property of Dark Horse Comics.

Makie as a Geisha by Karla Contreras, San Diego, California.

Dear *Blade of the Immortal*,

I just came back from a trip visiting Spain, Gibraltar, Portugal, Morocco, and Newark, New Jersey (my long layover). I went to two comic book stores in Madrid called Metropolis and Crisis. Believe me, they have a poor selection of comics, so it was nice to return to California and find Hiroaki Samura's *Blade of the Immortal* #108 on the shelves of A1 Comics. After my vacation, I have my own debt with VISA—and I'd rather have *that* debt than a debt to the Shogunate. I love the way Burando calls his self-made microscope a crude toy. Burando has a brilliant mind and probably has everyone baffled at his intellect. That combination of opium and *senso* (toad oil) sounds devastating, and if it smells like sake, it sure is misleading. *Blade of the Immortal* is once again filled with high-intensity drama, and, like always, I enjoy the artwork. Everything is quite detailed. This is one of the best manga monthlies around!

Sincerely yours,
Paul Dale Roberts,
jazmaonline.com
Elk Grove, California

I believe that *Blade of the Immortal* is the only single-title manga monthly on the market these days. Everything else is direct-to-trade or part of an anthology, it seems. Thanks very much for reading each month, globetrotter! It's great to hear from you, Paul.

Our Dream Team pinup run continues next month with a color contribution from one of Hiroaki Samura's most talented fans: Becky Cloonan (*Demo*, *American Virgin*, *East Coast Rising*). Yes, friends, THE Becky Cloonan!! See you next month, when Yamada Asaemon says, "The felons do squirm so."

—Philip S.

Manji by Silvestre "Véte" Fransisco, Portugal.

KRYPTONIA-DGP